

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD UNN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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SUBJECT: LEBANESE LEADERS SPEAK OUT ON RECENT CRISIS, SHOW CONTINUING
DIVISIONS

1. SUMMARY: IN RECENT DAYS, SEVERAL LEBANESE LEADERS INCLUDING PRIMIN KARAME HAVE MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT THE LATEST ROUND OF CLASHES. KARAME'S COMMENTS WERE MODERATE, BUT THOSE BY PIERRE GEMAYEL, TONY FRANGIE, AND RAYMOND EDDE WERE ACCUSATORY IN TONE. THE ONLY COMMON GROUND WAS A GENERAL AWARENESS THAT THE CRISIS HAD BEEN HARMFUL TO ALL CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

2. LEBANESE LEADERS OF VARIOUS TENDENCIES HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS IN RECENT DAYS EXPLAINING THEIR POSITION IN THE WAKE OF THE LATEST FIGHTING AND IN SOME CASES ATTACKING THEIR RIVALS FOR ALLEGED MISDEEDS DURING THE CRISIS. MOST NOTEWORTHY AMONG
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THESE WERE A JULY 20 SPEECH BY PRIMIN RASHID KARAME AND

A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD JULY 17 BY PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL. DEPUTY TONY FRANGIE, WHO AS THE PRESIDENT'S SON REFLECTS THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT, AND NATIONAL BLOC LEADER RAYMOND EDDE HAVE ALSO MADE STATEMENTS. EXCEPT FOR KARAME'S SPEECH, WHICH WAS MODERATE IN TONE, THESE DECLARATIONS HAVE SERVED MAINLY TO HIGHLIGHT THE SHARP POLITICAL DIVISIONS ALREADY EXISTING. GEMAYEL'S PRESS CONFERENCE HAS ENCOUNTERED PARTICULARLY STRONG CRITICISM IN MOSLEM CIRCLES, AND LEFTIST GROUPS HAVE SEIZED UPON IT AS A "PROVOCATION" (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. KARAME'S SPEECH WAS GIVEN AT THE OPENING OF A CULTURAL CENTER IN TRIPOLI, HIS NATIVE CITY. REPLYING TO CRITICS WHO KEEP ASKING WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DONE SINCE COMING TO POWER, HE SAID THAT EVERY LEBANESE MUST HELP TO LIFT THE COUNTRY FROM ITS PREDICAMENT, NOT JUST THE GOVERNMENT. THE ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR MUST BE REMOVED. HE REITERATED HIS OBTAINED VIEW THAT THE RECENT CLASHES WERE UNJUSTIFIED "NO MATTER HOW THEY ARE LOOKED UPON." NOTHING CAN BE SOLVED BY VIOLENCE, HE STRESSED. KARAME IMPLIED THAT THE PEOPLE MUST NOT TAKE THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, BUT SHOULD LET THE SECURITY FORCES AND THE JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES HANDLE SECURITY PROBLEMS. HE ALSO APPEALED TO THE PRESS TO ABSTAIN FROM PUBLISHING FRIGHTENING REPORTS ABOUT LEBANON.

4. GEMAYEL'S NEWS CONFERENCE WAS AIMED MAINLY AT FOREIGN PRESS BUT RECEIVED WIDE PUBLICITY IN LEBANON. HE STRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE RECENT FIGHTING RESULTED FROM A LEFTIST PLOT, NOT FROM CONFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES. FOREIGN LEFTISTS HAVE INFILTRATED LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN RANKS, HE ASSERTED, AND HAVE PROVOKED A BATTLE THAT IS AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF BOTH. HE IMPLIED THAT ANARCHISTS AND ZIONISTS ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO DISTORT BOTH THE LEBANESE NATION AND PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE. GEMAYEL BELIEVED THAT THE LEFTIST PRESS WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE TENSION BECAUSE IT GAVE "A PARTICULARLY MURDEROUS AND FEROCIOUS CHARACTER" TO THE CLASHES. HE APPEALED TO MOSLEMS AND TO THE PALESTINIAN FORCES TO AVOID THE BLANDISHMENTS OF THE LEFT AND ITS "FIFTH COLUMN."

5. GEMAYEL'S VIEWS FOUND AN ECHO IN THE COMMENTS OF TONY
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FRANGIE, PUBLISHED JULY 21 IN "AL HAYAT" AND "THE DAILY STAR". FRANGIE ACCUSED LEFTISTS OF SEEKING TO GAIN FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF LEBANON, AND HE BELIEVED THAT FOREIGN ELEMENTS WERE BEHIND THE REDENT CRISIS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WOULD RESTORE CALM, STATING THAT IF THIS PROVED IMPOSSIBLE THE PROBLEM WOULD BE REVEALED AS BIGGER THAN THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON. TURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF THE NATIONAL CHARTER, HE DECLARED THAT EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE CHARTER ARE A

"CONSPIRACY." HE WAS EMPHATICALLY OPPOSED TO SUCH PROPOSALS.

6. RAYMOND EDDE'S STATEMENTS CONTRASTED SHARPLY WITH THE ABOVE COMMENTS BY GEMAYEL AND TONY FRANGIE. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH PRO-IRAQI "AL MUHARRIR," HE STATED THAT PRES FRANGIE WAS MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LAST FIGHTING. THE PRESIDENT HAD DELIBERATELY DELAYED THE FORMATION OF A CABINET, EDDE CLAIMED.

7. COMMENTS: THE ABOVE REMARKS ARE BY NO MEANS UNCOMMON IN LEBANON'S STRIDENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE, BUT APART FROM KARAMEX ATTEMPT TO SOOTHE THE HOSTILE FORCES THEY SHOW A MARKED TENDENCY AT SELF-JUSTIFICATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF EVENTS RECOGNIZED AS DAMAGING FOR ALL CONCERNED. PARADOXICALLY, THIS SELF-CENTERED APPRECIATION OF THE HARM THAT THE RECENT CLASHES HAVE CAUSED IS ONE OF THE FEW CARDS THAT KARAME HAS TO PLAY IN HIS EFFORTS TO PACIFY THE SITUATION. GODLEY

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